



DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 9, 2005

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BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON.

13 January, 1972

Dear Dr. Kissinger

... In the absence of my Ambassador on the West Coast, I have been instructed to forward the enclosed personal message to President Nixon from the Prime Minister, Mr Heath, relating to the sub-continent and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's sudden visit to London.

I am of course at your disposal for the transmission of a reply or of any comments you may have.

Yours sincerely,

D.C. Tebbit

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H.M. Minister

The Honorable
Henry A. Kissinger,
The White House,
WASHINGTON DC.

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Following is the text of the message for the President:

Begins:-

" I have given much thought since we met in Bermuda to our policies in the Indian sub-continent in the new situation which has been created there. In this connection it was of particular interest to me to have an hour's talk with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when he came through London.

Mujib's arrival was unexpected. We first heard of his release in a message from Islamabad which was received when the aircraft carrying him was only an hour away. He later told me that he had suggested that he should be sent to Dacca or handed over to the Red Cross or the United Nations. These ideas were not, however, acceptable to Bhutto. He himself had refused to go to Tehran, and had finally agreed to come to London.

I thought that Mujib had borne his imprisonment well. Although obviously tired and not fully informed after nine months in solitary confinement, he spoke with confidence and assurance. He was anxious to reach Dacca as soon as possible and we gave him an R.A.F. aircraft for the onward journey. It was his own choice that he should not transfer to an Indian aircraft in Delhi.

Mujib told me that there ^{now} can be no question of a formal link between Bangladesh and West Pakistan. He had said the same to Bhutto prior to his release. In this he has

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confirmed the position of the Bangladesh authorities in Dacca and our own assessment of the state of affairs in the East. However, although he spoke with understandable bitterness of the actions of the previous Pakistan regime, he showed no rancour towards Bhutto, and said that he wished to establish good relations with West Pakistan. The new partition should be, in his words, "a parting as of brothers", but Bhutto had to acknowledge the division of Pakistan. Relations between the new Bangladesh and India would of course be much closer.

Sheikh Mujib spoke of his hope of Commonwealth membership. I assured him of our goodwill, but at the same time explained the reasons why we could not recognise Bangladesh at once. He shared our wish for harmonious relations between Britain and the three countries of the Indian sub-continent and he hoped that we would help to persuade Bhutto to accept the realities of the situation.

The independence of the East is clearly something which Bhutto cannot now change. If Mujib gets early recognition and support from the West it will improve his chance of keeping the country out of the hands of left wing extremists. While there may need to be a short delay to give him time to establish his personal authority, I am sure that it is not in the general Western interest that this waiting period should be long.



The problem is one of timing. Too early recognition would antagonise West Pakistan and complicate Bhutto's task. On the other hand, if we delay too long, the Communist countries will get a start on us in the East, and the position of their friends there will be strengthened.

Anything which you can do to help Bhutto accept the inevitability of recognition of Bangladesh would be most helpful. I am myself in touch with him and have told him that Mujib, in his talk with me, ruled out any formal link between East and West. But your views will I know weigh heavily with Bhutto and his government.

We shall also use all the influence we can to encourage Mujib, as well as the Indians, to be constructive and to avoid recriminations. The Awami League leaders have already asked us whether we can make our good offices available on a confidential basis for the resolution of problems between East and West Pakistan. I have told Bhutto that, although we have no wish to interfere, if there is anything that we can usefully do, we will be very ready to help.

I very much hope that you will agree that the time has now come to move forward on these lines. There is much at stake and I believe that it is of great importance that jointly we use all the influence at our disposal to maintain our position and interests in the sub-continent.

With sincere regards,

EDWARD HEATH. "

Ends